WHIRRAKEE

November 2005 Vol. 26 No. 10

Registered by Australia Post. Publication No. VBH4462

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

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Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper.
If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised and it usually starts at 7.00pm.
The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Ben Goonan, Richard Goonan, Bill Holsworth, Rob Moors, Rod Orr, Bob Ruddick, Darren White.

Excursions are conducted irregularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one active group that meets regularly (the Fauna Study Group) and other groups that meet at irregular intervals.

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observers Group: This group has field excursions and the occasional lecture evening. Please consult the *Whirrakee* for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5449 3479.
To propose meetings or excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see bottom of page 2.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 26, No.10, November 2005

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's note:
We have not quite finished with the celebrations and memories in relation the 60th anniversary. As you might gather from the single entry in the table of contents, this is a 60th anniversary – Peter Ellis special edition. Peter was to say a few words at the anniversary dinner, but found that in the time allocated to him (and a bit extra), he only just scratched the surface. In addition, members that did not attend the dinner might be interested in these memoirs. As the article reveals, Peter, a life member of the club, has had a long association with it. He also seems to have a sharp memory and is thus in a great position to make permanent some of these aspects of the club that are slowly disappearing.
Mark Bellette's talk on grass trees (October General Meeting) will be summarised in the December edition along with all other things that I had to leave out this time. Also, apologies to students of Laurel Street Primary School. There is a good chance that your frog poem will be published in the next edition of Whirrakee.

Front Cover Photograph – Photographer: **David and Jenny Shield**
Some of you might know that Jenny and David Shield have been living in the Northern Territory for some time now. They are still members of the BFNC and get sent their *Whirrakee* up there (albeit somewhat irregularly). Jenny has sent me a whole CD of Top End Nature pics, and this is one of these. Many of them are brilliantly coloured and a black-and-white picture does no justice to them.
The picture on the front cover is of a bladderwort, *Utricularia fulva*. The flower is peachy orange with dark red markings. It is an aquatic plant with the flowers emerging from the water (not easy to see here). On their submerged stems, bladderworts develop small bladder-like structures (hence the name). These are usually under negative pressure and when a passing aquatic invertebrate (e.g. mosquito larva) trips one of the sensitive hairs, the bladder opens and 'sucks' the prey in. The plant often grows in low nitrogen substrates and uses insects to supplement its diet.

SIXTY YEARS ON, FORTY YEARS BACK

Reminiscences of over forty years with the Bendigo Field Nats coinciding with their Sixtieth Year since foundation.

by Peter Ellis

I first heard of the Bendigo Field Nats over the wireless when about 9 or 10 years old, and that was when the club had applied for a Whipstick and Mandurang National Park respectively. In those days, everybody listened into Crosbie Morrison's nature notes and then he became the first director of National Parks. These events were all prominent local news of that era. Crosbie Morrison, unfortunately, had an untimely death due to cancer. I think, otherwise, the Whipstick proposals might have come through in those early days.

I next heard of the Field Nats several years later through Heck Cahill, who had been a member of the club, but who was also an ardent native plant gardener. His favourite plant was the Double Waxflower which he could grow from cuttings, and that was a real feat back then. I was extremely interested in native plants, wildflowers and the double waxflower, and I guess the period is about 1962 when I had first started Chemistry with Redvers Eddy as my teacher. Heck used to take me to Jackass Flat to see the *Boronia anenomifolia*, Whirrakee Wattle etc., and, of course, Red used to speak of the Whipstick and the double wax, in fact Red drew up a little strip map for me and I rode my bicycle all the way out beyond the Whirrakee wattle paddock for my first self excursion.

Another friend through horticulture, Ken Maes, had said we should join the Field Nats, so about 1963 or 4; we had Redvers Eddy nominate us as members. The first excursion I walked in from Quarry Hill to the corner of Mundy and McCrae St where everybody met before nominating a car share and heading off. I walked in monthly for some years before either getting a lift or having my own car. The excursion was to see the *Acacia flexifolia*. It was led by Bill Perry and was a real experience. The botanical names were a bit daunting at first as the elderly members would sing out a plant's second name, so 'Aspalathioides' here, 'Froggattii' there, I've found a 'Robusta' or likewise, and of course Bob Allen was likely to call out 'Agapanthus' this way. Once, someone planted a pink plastic flower in amongst some ground foliage, and Frank went along with the act of trying to identify it and there was much merriment and laughter by the gathering.

The experts of the club, Jack Kellam, Frank Robbins, Jack Ipsen, Bob Allan and Bill Perry were always very helpful and ensured all the information was made known and explained to the newcomers. Tom Patullo also turned up for that, his first excursion, and was nominated at the next meeting. I got to know most of the foundation members of the club, except Marc Cohn, who I don't think was in good health in those days, although a few years later he did attend a meeting where all the other foundation members fussed around him with much respect. I think Marc was credited with being the main motivator in bringing the other foundation members together to form the club. I recall being told, that as a member of the Cohn family and Cohn's Brewery, that at the early committee meetings it was common to have a couple of bottles of beer at hand.

The meetings were held at the Anderson Theatre at the then Bendigo Technical College (now BRIT McCrae St site), and following the demise of the Princess Theatre, gained the extremely comfortable theatre seats. About 15 years later Westy Williams of BIT had the theatre refurbished with plastic seats to modernise it. They were terribly uncomfortable.

There was one unfortunate occasion when Jack Kellam in the deep boomy voice exclaimed, 'You're out of order Mister President'. Bill Perry was in the chair and took great exception to Jack's comment, although I'm sure there was no ill intent, but these things happen sometimes. It took many years and a Life Membership to coax Bill, a very valued foundation member back into the fold.

Bill was an expert on spiders and insects as well as local history. Two of his most famous books, I think, are Tales of the Whipstick and The End of an Era, a history of the early days of Eaglehawk as recalled as a boy. His most fascinating account in the latter is the walking from Eaglehawk to Bendigo to see the Easter procession. Bill had a very rare slide of a view over 'Westringia Gully' (Phillip's Gully) which showed the *Westringia crassifolia* in full lilac bloom high above the supporting canopy of *Melaleuca decussata.* Unfortunately, Westringia Gully was later substantially altered and Bill's photo would now be totally unrecognisable in perspective today, and the Westringia is greatly reduced.

There was one meeting when I was Secretary and Sho Takasuka from Huntly was President and a special Japanese film crew who were out here made a short documentary about Sho, I think. Anyway on that night, someone had brought in an echidna and Frank Robbins handled it with the safety of a sugar bag for the TV crew. They filmed part of the meeting with Sho in the chair for people back home in Japan. Many years later we did get to see that film, wish I knew how to get onto it now.

On another night Billy and Milly Read spoke about a recent trip and Milly announced they saw a Porcupine. The same deep boomy voice retorted 'There are no porcupines in Australia, you saw an Echidna'.

The comment was often made on how excellent the speakers were at the monthly meetings and that seldom did we need to go outside the club for good and extremely knowledgeable talks. Except perhaps for Frank, who held a Science degree and was a Science Maths teacher at Bendigo High School and then Golden Square, most of these very knowledgeable members were working class men at places like the Railway Workshops, Timber Company etc, yet all could have been University lecturers had there been that opportunity in their youth. Of course there was also a good balance of guest speakers. One that comes to mind as outstanding was Government Botanist, Dr Jim Willis, who spoke on at least two occasions. I also remember the Chief Secretary (name escapes me at present, but starts with H (Holt??) volunteering a talk and saying how we had no way of ever getting the Whipstick a National Park. Anyway that's a little deviation of which I'm apt to do, being a deviant person.

Most of the women in the club in those days were not academic in the way the founding men had been, I guess they were there, following their husbands' interests and supporting them as well as the very important social side and certainly in the very early years of the club, in bringing the children along.

Mrs Grylls, I would think in her eighties, joined the club in those early days. Had she been younger, she would have been up there with the men in first hand natural history interest and knowledge. She had a series of 1913 editions of the Victorian Naturalist which she loaned me to read and which were later donated to the club library. She was extremely interested in wildflowers and was, I considered, a learned and well read lady. I can remember her hardly able to walk, one foot swollen up and toes poking out the side of a slit slipper, the other foot in a shoe and with a walking stick, made it up Cockatoo Hill,

Burns St., to view the recently discovered *Veronica (Parahebe) perfoliata.*

Elsie Flanagan, of course, was a primary school teacher and generally interested in everything. However, following her European trip, she had slides of several hundred buildings and cathedrals which Bob and I had to sit through first, to help her arrange for a club talk. Of course, she only got half way through them and wanted a follow up talk. I can still see Bob wincing at the thought of having to view all the cathedrals again at a third sitting. It was one Flanagan and Allen floorshow that didn't find an encore.

Evelyn Leamon, on joining the club, became a very valued member and of immense help to me as Secretary in typing all the minutes and the articles, precursor to Whirrakee. She, of course, was one of the instigators of 'Wildflowers of Bendigo'.

I guess one of the keenest female members of the club in those early days was Glenise Moors, and, of course, she needs no introduction to present members in terms of her level and expertise in natural history. But in those early days Rob and Glenise lived in Melbourne and although they did make many special trips to the meetings and excursions, involvement committee-wise was not possible till they moved to Bendigo. Rob and Glenise both studied Chemistry with me and I find it amusing to think back, Redvers Eddy referred to her as an ornament in class, and we were very lucky she was there, as he was frequently restrained, although often asked her to leave the room so he could let forth, although it never happened.

Leon Ruedin felt that the women in the club were not well represented and to use a modern term, considered the committee needed gender balance; so the committee numbers were extended and many of the wives elected. I can remember Frank Robbins complaining once that things were being held up because of all the chatter. Did that cause a moment's silence before proceedings resumed as before?

I think that Glenise made a very apt point at the sixtieth celebration dinner, that she wouldn't have the knowledge that those old men had, and to be able to pass it on. What she really meant of course, was not simply herself, but I know I wouldn't come near the knowledge and expertise those old fellas had, and it is the very thing I miss today in the club – those characters with their local knowledge. They were all rounders as well, with a down to earth way of imparting information and with dry humour.

Now another elderly group that comes to mind was Mr and Mrs Fred Taylor and Wyn Bennett (Mrs Taylor's sister). They lived at Harcourt, but had originally come from Longlea on Bennett's Road which was named after their family. The Bennett family home had been just beyond the railway line on the left as you drive up Bennett's Road to the right off McIvor Highway from Bendigo. I think this is the land that may have been purchased and returned to the crown as flora reserve. Anyway it was the home of the duck orchids, generally the larger duck orchid, although the minor was also there, but had gradually reduced in numbers, perhaps to local extinction. There was also a magnificent patch of very pink double wax and this was the form first propagated by the Botanical Gardens in Melbourne about 1912 through Government Botanist, Pescott. Anyway Fred wrote about it in the first issue of the Bendigo Naturalist. When we were introduced to the Longlea area there were plenty of Duck Orchids to be found, but Fred and Mrs Taylor and Wyn never ceased (quite justifiably) to wail about the desecration of the area by the Bendigo City Council. According to Fred, the Council had been told it was a low quality gravel area, but needless to say

went ahead and removed all the gravel, in places, according to Fred, fifteen feet down, and that is where the pink double wax was, as well as the better area for duck orchids, and in particular the small duck orchard. Rumour goes that the Council later could not make use of the gravel.

Fred was an old world gentleman, and he would comment on how you would use only first person names when you knew a person extremely well. Of course with Bob and Tom and I, it was Fred, not Mr Taylor, he had no choice, but it was Mrs Taylor. Wyn, whom I think may have been the stricter, I think was Wyn, rather than Miss Bennett. You may find this amusing, but that was the situation.

This trio, Mr Taylor, Mrs Taylor and Miss Bennett, went to a lot of trouble fencing of remnants of orchids around Castlemaine district, Spider Orchids and particularly the red forms and the (can't think of it at the moment, but there was a stand near Goornong on the railway line, about 21-2 mile post, no haven't got that right, must go under hypnotism sometime for a memory recall. Maybe its 121 from Melbourne?) In the meantime it's the purple Diuris. The first time we travelled to Harcourt to be taken on an excursion of the best areas of orchids around Castlemaine, Miss Bennett, exclaimed, 'there will be no picking of wildflowers'. Was this a reverse Freudian point or what! Bob had a license, and of course always discrete, sent specimens regularly to the Herbarium. Tom and I equally discrete, only dug things up of roadways. You see, Heck Cahill had shown me how to transplant small plants from 'roadways' using a cement trowel. The technique was to lift an inverted pyramid of compact earth around the root area, and it worked fantastically. Never lost anything. But we only did this, discretely, at roadside edges, where the grader would later come through. It was a regular practise on club excursions, but you had to watch Frank Robbins, or more particularly, Arthur Ebdon, both would run for shovels and Arthur rip a whole branch of a tree or find a log to help if necessary. A very terse Elsie Flanagan said, 'if Mr Kellam catches you, you'll be in real trouble'. So it never happened again although Jack had seen us many times removing plants from the middle or edge of a track.

But of course Frank had transplanted *Acacia flexifolia* from the Whipstick, *Thryptomene calycina* from the Grampians, *Epacris impressa* probably from the Ridge Road Fryerstown and *Astraloma conestephioides* probably from Inglewood, and planted them in the Boronia patch behind Spring Gully Reservoir. Even Redvers Eddy used to marvel at 'Robbins' Epacris' in the Boronia patch. Well it wasn't there in my early days in the club, but the *Thryptomene* certainly was, and I planted a double wax (at least local and non reproductive) there. I think one of the funnier things on helping Cliff Beauglehole with his LCC survey in this area was when Frank and I took him to the Boronia patch. 'Well that couldn't be here, that's amazing, by gee!'. I planted it, says Frank! YOU @#$%^&* WHAT!! retorts Cliff.

In reflecting about the way we did things in those early days, it was considered by the club elders that eucalyptus cutting was beneficial to the wildflowers, and to a degree as with regeneration from roadside clearing or a fire, there is enormous vigorous regrowth and a clear dense show of wildflowers. So without going into a long story that eventually will come up with an opposite opinion, that is the subject of a separate article. When the Whipstick National Park submission of 1956 or 7 became a non-event, the trade off was a token small fenced area near Flagstaff Hill off Skylark Road which we referred to as the Phebalium patch (*P. obcordatum* of the day). As the mallee inside the patch grew tall, the wildflowers within seemed to be

gradually crowded out in contrast to the area outside the fence where the eucalyptus was still cut and the ground flora was much better to view. So periodically, armed with axes and mallets, about every 4 or 5 years, there was a club working bee to knock out the mallee regrowth. We did the same with a long forgotten reserve on the Ridge Road somewhere between Fryerstown and Drummond; on behalf of the Native Plants Preservation Society. I don't know who else in the club, apart from Jack Ipsen and possibly Rob and Glen, would remember that little fenced area. Anyway as Eric Wilkinson has pointed out, getting back to the Phebalium Patch, had we waited for the mallee to grow taller, the understorey would then have come back. In some ways I felt it a pity when the Forest Park was created, that the fence around the Phebalium patch was removed. It would have been of immense scientific interest some years later to do a study within and without. I don't recall we ever had cleanups of the Boronia patch behind Spring Gully reservoir, but I think originally rabbits were the problem there, same as the problem with *Phebalium pungens* at Mandurang. Redvers Eddy maintained the rabbit proof fencing of the Boronia patch saved the day and allowed it to regenerate. Today I think the fence has also been removed in one section, it needs to be assessed. Most likely, Kangaroos and more so Wallabies would be the potential threat. The Field Naturalists in those days were very content with a small patch of bush being fenced off and reserved; generally the park concept had not taken on except for that first National Park application.

Other memorable things in the club's past I think was the wonderful wildflower show that was assembled in the Memorial Hall for it's 25th anniversary, and then as Eric Wilkinson pointed out, the 30th anniversary, was a most amazing display in MacGillivray Hall, with everything, wildflowers, native plants, rocks and minerals, photographs of birds and other wildlife, and a special gift of a double waxflower to woo the Minister for Conservation, Bill Borthwick, who was then whisked out to Ruedins in the Whipstick for a special bbq lunch and red wine, a view of the eucalyptus factory and the mallee fowls' nest, and the hard word for a National Park. Pat and Mary Ward excelled themselves in the food and wine presentation. It was a blinking miserable day, with a bleak raw wind, the minister noticeably shivering, but nevertheless he was impressed the second time round. (You'll have to read conservation history of the Whipstick in the early Whirrakee series to find out what impressed him first time round. (Answer will be given a month or two later)

On the conservation side, I've submitted this as a separate article, but haven't said what sparked it off in terms of the Whipstick case. But I was there on a trip in the middle sixties with, from memory, Jack Ipsen, Frank Robbins, Bob Allen, Tom Patullo and myself, possibly Jack Kellam, and visiting representative from the Victorian National Parks Association, Ros Garnet. We stood on a roadside rise and looked over 3,000 acres of Whipstick Scrub (Burnsides) that was about to be cleared. I think we also had heard of the first rumblings of news that 'Black Jack McDonald' (the Minister for Lands) thought the crown land, as with the Little Desert, should also be opened for development. I can't explain the air of despair and dismay on that day, but that is what spurred Frank to commence his Whipstick survey and to take them on. Ros Garnet had considerable advice to offer on the possibilities and conservation tactics.

I can remember much later when Bob Allen as President and the older members had been very diligent in trying to keep up good relations with the local landholders, whom had been good friends. There was a little altercation at Ted Hartland's. Now

Ted had been a good associate of the Field Nats etc., but the sale of his Red Box Hut block was the turning point that resulted in the club applying for an IDO to protect private land from development until such time as the Government could offer funds to buy it back. In the previous years whenever guests arrived, such as the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria, or Geelong Field Nats, there was always a Whipstick tour and usually Bob in particular, helped by Tom Patullo would lay out a labelled nature trail. Red Box Hut was a popular choice, but of course private land owned by Ted Hartland, who was nevertheless impressed and sympathetic to the interests of the club. However when the threat of an IDO loomed, that was a (understandably from their point of view), a very different thing. Anyway Bob and I and probably Tom were out at Ted's. We often called in, and some discussion took place about 'imminent' things. Anyway we discussed proposals for the Forest Park, which at the time seemed a good compromise to allow continued use of forest products and appease land users. I forget what quip Ted's son made, but Bob threw his biro to the ground and said 'That's it; we're going for a National Park'.

Setting the conservation campaign aside, because coping with the Whipstick, Jackass Flat and Salomens' Gully all at once was enough for me (but it was every inch worth it), I pay credit to three Presidents of the day who were most supportive, Mal Hopkins, Rob Moors and Bob Allen.

There are many other social sides to reflect on. For years the club hosted a public presentation by the Native Plants Preservation Society of the extremely popular 'Photoflora' slide competition. This was centred on wildflowers mainly, but included other sections and novelties within wildlife; insects, birds etc. Redvers Eddy won a top award in the first year, about 1964, with his double waxflower slide, and also his golden pennants in the Wellsford Forest and kino exuding from an Ironbark trunk. As a consequence, he became a Photoflora judge in the remaining years of his life to 1967. Club members, Rob and Cynthia Watkins, were later to be enthusiastic exhibitors along with Reg Smart, all regularly taking out top awards. There is nothing today that comes anywhere near the public interest in Photoflora. The club actually had a silver 'Redvers Eddy' award medallion (a mistletoe bird feeding its young at the nest) that was presented for a particular section.

The campouts were extremely popular and the first in my time was to Wyperfeld National Park in the middle to late 1960s when Rod Campbell was still ranger. Bleak and cold was the weather (June long weekend) with wonderful fogs drifting across the lake beds, fuzzing images of stumps that were really kangaroos. The campfire was the highlight with recitations by Tom Patullo, but George Walker stole the scene with his rendition of 'Phantom Drovers'.
Mt. Arapiles was another great campout and in particular at night in Tom's 12 x 18 tent when Bob Allen organised a game of cootee. That had to be seen to be believed with Bob blowing his whistle at the wrong time and people standing up here or there and sitting down again because he'd set them up. We also had some good trips to Mid Murray Field Nats and campouts in the sand dunes and mallee at Kooloonong.

Alan and Bobbie Malone also invited us to Reefton Camp with excursions to see Lyre Birds at Sherbrooke Forest. These were memorable camps that were held for several years in succession. Reg Smart and my mum with Bob and Em Allen (and I) had a cabin hideaway with little port sessions of a night. However the highlight of the trip was when the excursion ran well over lunch time and Edith Lunn exclaimed, 'If I see a bloody lyrebird, I'll eat the @#$%^*!'

I suppose the most famous occasion in past history for Presidents and Secretaries was Dorothy Field. Now that's another lady not mentioned so far. Dorothy lived off the corner of McDougall Rd and the main Hattam Rd from Quarry Hill to Golden Square. She was an extremely active collector of funds for groups like the Red Cross. Dorothy must have walked hundreds of miles in her day around Bendigo. However because she lived close to Golden Square High School, she was forever plagued by naughty school children. Usually it was something about magpies being persecuted . I'm getting myself into a corner here, because the last thing I would want to do is appear to put Dorothy down, and that's not the intention. She was most definitely all for the cause. However for some strange reason, she always waited till the meeting was closed before standing up and vetting her opinion as to some foul play, generally caused by mischievous young lads. On this occasion Bob Allen was in the chair, I was Secretary. On the third call of 'has anyone got any other general business', to which there was nothing, Bob declared the meeting closed. On cue, Dorothy stood up, 'Mister President, there's a bird in the middle of my intersection'! Well even Dorothy smirked at what she had just said. That's all I saw because I knocked my papers to floor so I had some excuse to duck under the dais out of view while Bob threw his biro on the bench.

There was a very different attitude between the founding members generation, namely Jack Kellam and Frank Robbins, and the next generation of Bob Allen and Tom Patullo. The older members were very loyal to the Field Naturalists Club of Victoria (FNCV) and this was natural, they were members of this club before forming the BFNC and continued close ties over the years. Bob and Tom saw the benefits of the BFNC becoming members of the Western Victorian Field Naturalist Clubs Association (WVFNC) and like Rob Moors and myself, viewed the FNCV as a valuable club, but as a Melbourne FNC rather than representing Victoria. We did join the WFNCA and later Bob and I were President and Secretary and it was a wonderful association. However there was much resistance by the old guard ahead of the membership. Eventually through the WVFNC encouragement was given to the Eastern clubs to form their own association and a consequence was eventually a merger to create a Victorian Field Naturalist Clubs Association

Well, I draw to a close with my recollections, the last are more recent. It was a terrible shame in his remaining years that Bob suffered from Alzheimer's. It's strange because he always knew me, but never my car. In fact Graham told me his dad had forgotten more than he ever knew. I wouldn't have believed that. About 13 or 14 years back when I first moved to Flora Lane, I took Bob up there once to see my new dwelling. Some years later, an old chap from Kyneton area wanted information on accordion playing. I gave him directions including the cemetery as a reference to turning left into Houston St and then right etc at Retreat Rd. He turned into Houston St. as directed and couldn't remember the rest; stopping right in front of Bob and Graham Allen, would you believe. Asking if they knew me and directions, Graham said, 'Oh dad wouldn't know that', and Bob immediately and accurately told him how to find me.

However, at one of the last meetings Bob was at, there was a plant to be identified and in a book he pointed to *Virgilia capensis*. That was when I accepted what Graham had said. I think in the latter times when I brought Bob along to meetings he really felt disappointed about the lack of specimens. In the earlier years there was always a specimen table, Bob in particular, but also helped by Tom Patullo Frank Robbins, ensured that flowering plants of the month, whether bush or garden, were

on show, as well as anything else of interest, insects, spiders, birds, rocks, you name it. Bob had things like a block of wood with a borer's hole, and next to it, he'd drilled a hole. You had to work out which was nature, which was man made. He had an amazing magpie or crow's nest, weaved out of wire.

But I should have mentioned, when Bob joined the club, he knew nothing of plants. He quizzed Jack Kellam and Frank Robbins to the extreme. He was a smoker in those days and determined to learn everything by writing the names of at least six new plants on his cigarette packet during each excursion. At Bob's peak, like Frank Robbins, he knew every tiny plant that existed. Frank had a moss named after himself. Now every Tuesday night Frank called at Bob's house and they recorded on card files all the plant finds of the week. This card file would be the most extensive record of the plants in this region. I recognised it by Frank's writing after Bob had passed on when Graham handed anything pertaining to Field Nats over. It was in the little room at the club quarters, but is not there now, so every effort must be made to locate it. It's been suggested it may have gone out to the Ironbark Centre. If that's the case, well and good, but it needs to be found and entered onto computer records.

Speaking of those nights at Bob's, Frank always looked at his watch round about 9 or 9.30, and then raced out the door. On one occasion he did this, and shortly after the doorbell rang. It was Frank back to continue. 'Myrtle's away on holidays!' There's no other way to continue this story, so if you are concerned about a blasphemous statement (but innocent comment), skip the next bit. Suddenly we hadn't seen Frank for awhile. Jack Kellam said 'called over to Robbins' the other day, Christ the house is in a mess, Myrtle's coming home Friday'!

The last contemporary memory, but some years back now, was when Jack Ipsen had the tortoise on show, when he picked it up it p**sed all down his leg.

I conclude in saying the best memory for some time was the sixtieth anniversary dinner and the catching up with old acquaintances, should they never be forgot.

Editor's comment
In this article, Peter alluded to a separate piece on the conservation activities in the 1970s. This (much shorter article) will appear in the next edition.

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meetings

Wednesday, November 9 7.30pm
David Hollands, a wildlife photographer is the speaker, and his topic is 'Owls of the World'.

Wednesday, December 14 6.30pm
Christmas Dinner
(Note earlier starting time. Bring some food to share if you like, and bring your own drinks).
The speaker is Neville Rosengren and he will discuss conservation issues for the Giant Gippsland Earthworm.

Fauna Group

This group meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm.

Wednesday, November 23 7.30pm
Topic: Birds of Lord Howe Island (slides by Rob and Cynthia Watkins)

Wednesday, February 22 7.30pm
Topic: Possums

Excursions

Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30, the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone but go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

Club Excursions

General Club excursions have, over the last few years, been organised by individuals or the committee on an *ad hoc* basis.
Richard Goonan, one of the new committee members this year, is keen to get a structured excursion program underway again. It is certainly inspiring to read in Peter Ellis' article what fun excursions used to be. In order to help Richard, could members let him know, where they would like an excursion to go to, and at what time of the year it would work best. He will then put together a program for next year.
You can contact Richard via the general club address.

BFNC Garden Working Bee

Regular garden working bees are held on the Saturday before each general meeting.

The next working bee will be on **Saturday, 5th November, 9am.**

All welcome

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals.
It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Natural Resources and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need.
Phone: 0419 356433.

Bendigo Field Naturalists on the web

Any comments about the site are most welcome.
http://communitysites.impulse.net.au/bendigofieldnaturalists/fnats.html